

From: [NSW Government](#)
To: [Flood Inquiry](#)
Subject: Floods Inquiry
Date: Friday, 20 May 2022 2:05:22 PM
Attachments: [NSW Parliamentary Flood Inquiry 2022 - Wollondilly Shire Council Submission.pdf](#)

Your details

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Submission details

I am making this submission as Other

Submission type I am submitting on behalf of my organisation

Organisation making the submission (if applicable) Wollondilly Shire Council

Your position in the organisation (if applicable) Manager Assets, Transport & Engineering

Consent to make submission public I give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Terms of Reference (optional)

The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#)

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- [NSW Parliamentary Flood Inquiry 2022 - Wollondilly Shire Council Submission.pdf](#)
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Our Reference: 13590-1#253

Professor Mary O'Kane AC AND Michael Fuller APM
Independent Flood Inquiry

C/o – Flood Inquiry Submissions Portal

20 May 2022

Dear Professor O'Kane and Mr Fuller APM,

NSW PARLIAMENTARY 2022 FOOD INQUIRY SUBMISSION

The Wollondilly community has been severely impacted by successive emergency events and recovery is a significant challenge for Council and the community that is proving difficult to resolve.

Consecutive emergency events such as the 'one in 300-year flood' in June 2016, Black Summer bushfires of 2019/20, flooding in February 2020, flooding in March 2021 and most recently February to March 2022, have taken a significant toll our road network, particularly the higher order arterial roads that provide regional accessibility.

Council's appropriate response to the emergent issues during these events is and was to keep the road network functioning as well as supporting our community and the emergency services; however, this has compromised Council's ability to adhere to its long-term asset management strategy and is impacting its short term and long term financial forecasts.

Council's concerns in relation to current and future flood events are the:

1. Funding and Process for Emergency Relief Funding

The level of evidence requested is incredibly difficult to provide (i.e. photos of assets prior and during the event), and Council is now suffering from the accumulated damage from successive events, while claims are made only on each specific event.

The response from the 2022 event should be applauded where Council benefitted from an initial grant from the OLG early in the event, that assisted Council's response and clean up plus the early payment of recovery money from Resilience NSW via TfNSW.

Yet, some claims from 2020 and 2021 are still to be resolved and Council is not yet confident that all claims made for 2022 will be successful exacerbating the financial impacts of the events on council and hence the community we serve

A review is required on the process and system for emergency relief claims, in particular the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies to ensure proactive, consistent, efficient and direct support to Councils in a timely manner

2. Ownership and Responsibilities of Watercourses

The ownership and responsibilities for watercourses is poorly understood and poorly defined which becomes a significant issue post event. Vegetation management etc on privately held watercourses, including Crown Land and Crown water ways, is a consistent issue for Council with landowners erroneously assuming that the responsibility lies with Councils.

This error is then occasionally reinforced by misunderstandings in State agencies such as Department of Industry (Crown Lands) who refer to the NSW Floodplain Development Manual and Council's responsibility for floodplain management planning and conflate that role with a land owner responsibility for maintenance.

Under the Local Government Act, Council cannot carry out works on land other than its own unless it is to carry out works specifically to protect adjacent public assets or approved a "public works"

High level education, coordination, guidance and support is required to assist these land owners address vegetation and debris management and removal.

3. Ownership, Responsibilities & coordination for cross agency impacts

The collapse of a railway embankment supporting the Sydney- Melbourne rail lines and the Heritage Loop line has and continues to impact on Council's road network leading to transport disruption in Picton. The works required to secure the railway is hampering Council's ability to access and protect the road structure and there appears to be a lack of acceptance on the part of the rail operators that the stability issue is wholly within the rail corridor and is not a function of Council's road. The only path for escalation to resolve issues is through political means.

High level coordination and control is required where separate agencies are required to perform works to ensure alignment and efficient use of resources, and consistent and clear messaging to the community.

In addition, rail operators appear to place priority on essential maintenance of the rail lines for continued freight movement with little attention to general rail corridor maintenance resulting in, for example, non or poorly functioning drains which impact on adjacent residents and council's road assets.

4. Accessibility and consistency of information from rain & water gauges

The network of rain and flood gauges across the catchments are inconsistent and poorly understood. We are seeing a growth in monitoring cameras that primarily are used for road management purposes that can give a reliable feed on water levels and rate of rise at some road locations such as the Menangle Road bridge over the Nepean River and an expansion of this facility should be considered.

The calibration of the remote gauges to river levels at specific road crossings is an opportunity for improvement for flood management and an important source of reassurance advice to the community.

A review is required on how to integrate the messaging around gauges and cameras during these times to be a one source of truth and ensure the community has clarity of where to source information and the understanding of the messaging during those times.

5. External Communications for Road Management (including closures and Integration to Live Traffic)

At a level beyond local government boundaries; 'Live Traffic' (facilitated by the NSW State Government) is the only source of information that can capture 'cross (LGA) border' issues; however, Live Traffic is predominantly only used for State managed roads, requiring users to consult the various local government sources of information as well as Live Traffic.

This current operating model creates several community issues including:

- Travellers from outside of a council area may use Live Traffic for their primary route selection and not understand what local government area they may be entering to try and source local information e.g. travellers from greater Sydney trying to access the remote historic village of Yerranderie in Wollondilly via the Colong-Oberon Stock Route that is only accessible from Oberon
- Disruptions to the local road network requiring the closure of state road connections e.g. the closure of Remembrance Driveway in Wollondilly requiring the management of the Hume Motorway
- Leaving the state road network and driving into flood closure areas on the local network

A review is required on how to integrate the messaging and managing for an integrated road network view during these times to be a one source of truth and ensure the community has clarity of where to source information and the understanding of the messaging during those times and improve community safety and emergency access.

This could include an integrated network of rain/water gauges (see above), emergency warning signs and consistency of Council publishing information on their websites or accessing Live Traffic in real time.

6. Timeliness and Consistency of Flood Warning/Evacuation Messaging

Consistency around messaging around flood warnings and evacuation become confused during peak times. Picton suffered various levels of confusion around the need for evacuation during the 2022 event.

A review is required on how messaging around the evacuation and evacuation warnings during these times to be a one source of truth and ensure the community has clarity of where to source information and the understanding of the messaging during those times.

Examples of opportunities in this area include:

- Issue of flood warnings and then flood evacuation orders after access routes are closed
- Planning requirements for the opening of evacuation centres following flood evacuation orders when affected residents are already isolated

7. Land use planning and development control

A review of land use planning is urgently needed including the catchment/network wide strategy for access and evacuations. During the peak of the various flood events, the communities of Silverdale & Warragamba as well as Menangle and Douglas Park were isolated with only one transport link remaining open.

These links become vulnerable with significant congestion (being the only option available), subject to congestion related issues such as MVA's, inhibiting access for emergency services and in a worst case scenario are also flood prone and may need to be managed and closed.

Development decisions and controls need to be risk based recognising constraints identified in the Draft NSW Flood Risk Management Manual, with greater technical and funding support to Councils to better understand and manage risk to the community.

8. Cost of Insurance & support for landowners

High level education, coordination, guidance and support is required to land owners to inform of flood recovery options and support available as well as the levels of insurance that may or may not be available.

We note this submission will be discussed at Councils Ordinary Meeting of June which will endorse and/or refine this submission at that time.

Please feel free to contact me on _____ if you would like to discuss any of the detail further.

Yours faithfully



Mike Nelson

Manager

ASSETS, TRANSPORT AND ENGINEERING